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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: MFA REASSURES VISITING SCA/CEN DIRECTOR THAT  
KAZAKHSTAN WILL UPHOLD ODIHR'S MANDATE

1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

2. (SBU) SUMMARY: MFA Americas Department Director Askar Tazhiyev told visiting SCA/CEN Director Tom Hushek on April 8 that Kazakhstan is committed to upholding ODIHR's mandate during its 2010 OSCE Chairmanship. Tazhiyev explained Kazakhstan's view of the top priorities in Afghanistan and floated the idea of the United States "using its influence" to help Central Asian states come to agreement on water, energy, and border issues. Tazhiyev reiterated that a visit by President Obama to Kazakhstan would "send an important signal" on the bilateral relationship. During a lunch with representatives of the diplomatic corps, Turkish Ambassador to Kazakhstan Attila Gunay railed against the European Union, in particular France and Germany, for stalling on Turkey's EU membership. The ambassadors gave President Nazarbayev high marks for his expert balancing of relations with Russia, China, and the United States. They also agreed that by continuously rotating a small cadre of political elite through various high-level government assignments, Nazarbayev assures loyalty and political stability. In a separate meeting, Vice Minister of Energy Asset Magauov told Hushek that he fully understands that Kazakhstan needs to follow through on its funding commitments for the joint U.S.-Kazakhstani project to decommission and store spent fuel from Kazakhstan's BN-350 plutonium reactor, but admitted that few in the government understand the full scope and urgency of the project. END SUMMARY.

MFA REAFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO UPHOLD ODIHR'S MANDATE

3. (SBU) Visiting SCA/CEN Director Tom Hushek met on April 8 in Astana with MFA Americas Department Director Askar Tazhiyev. Tazhiyev, who has previously served at the Kazakhstani Embassy in Washington, was open and relaxed, speaking in fluent idiomatic English and peppering the conversation with light-hearted jokes. Referring to the widely-reported invitation to visit Kazakhstan which Senate Chairman Tokayev delivered to President Obama in Istanbul, Tazhiyev said that an Obama visit would "send an important signal" about the U.S.-Kazakhstan bilateral relationship. He welcomed President Obama's emphasis on Afghanistan and shared what Kazakhstan sees as the top priorities there -- education for girls, job creation in agriculture, and good governance. Tazhiyev

postulated that Afghanistan -- "an Asian nation" -- will need some time to adjust to "an open democracy." Asked about Kazakhstan's priorities for its 2010 OSCE chairmanship, Tazhiyev said the focus will be on moving frozen conflicts towards resolution, "although it will be hard." He stressed that Kazakhstan is committed to upholding ODIHR's mandate, and supports the idea of ODIHR observing the Afghan elections. Tazhiyev added that he wished the United States "would use its influence" to bring Central AsianQtes to agreement on the plethora of outstanding disputes on water rights, energy, and borders. "Let me be frank," he confided, "Moscow still decides (the major questions)" -- but the region needs a more honest broker. Hushek explained there were limits to what the United States could do -- which led Tazhiyev to admit that the Central Asian states themselves have to take responsibility for coming up with permanent solutions.

#### TURKISH AMBASSADOR RAILS AGAINST THE EU

14. (SBU) On April 7, the Ambassador hosted a lunch in Hushek's honor with senior diplomats from like-minded countries. The guests included Turkish Ambassador Attila Gunay, Czech Ambassador Bedrich Kopecky, Swiss Ambassador Stephan Nellen, Indian Ambassador Ashok Sajjanhar, German DCM Wolfgang Brett, Dutch DCM Maurits ter Kuile, European Commission DCM Hubert Petit. The lunch conversation was for the most part cordial and open, although the tone became somewhat strained when the subject of Turkey's EU membership came up. Ambassador Gunay reacted quite emotionally to a light-hearted joke that Kazakhstan could lay a claim to EU membership by the virtue of the large section of its territory that lies west of the Ural River and is thus in Europe -- a landmass larger than the European territory of EU candidate Turkey. "This issue is very serious," a visibly irked Gunay said, explaining that Turkey's bid

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for EU membership cannot be compared to any Kazakhstani claim. Gunay praised President Obama for supporting Turkey's candidacy and railed against Germany and France for putting the brakes on it "once again" and for refusing to go beyond the stage of "special relationship." In Turkey, this is read as "not being wanted" in Europe, he maintained. Gunay argued that Turkey has complied with all its commitments since negotiations began in 1963, but that the EU has consistently failed to "live up to its promises." "It's like we are not part of civilization," he charged. Gunay stated his views so strongly and emotionally that embarrassed silence ensued.

#### NAZARBAYEV'S FOREIGN POLICY -- "NOT A ZERO SUM GAME"

15. (SBU) Diffusing the situation, the Ambassador steered the conversation toward Kazakhstan and its external relations. Indian Ambassador Sajjanhar said he sees great potential for Indian-Kazakhstani relations, but admitted that greater economic cooperation is hindered by lack of direct transport routes. Hushek pointed out that India's support for Kazakhstan's requested membership in the IAEA's Middle East and South Asia (MESA) group would go a long way in strengthening the bilateral ties. Sajjanhar agreed, saying that he is in contact with India's ambassador to the IAEA on the subject. All the participants agreed that President Nazarbayev has shown great skill in pursuing the multi-vector policy of balancing Kazakhstan's relations with Russia, China, the United States, and, more recently, the EU. "To him, it is not a zero-sum game, he sees the benefits in all these relationships," summed up Sajjanhar.

#### INTERNAL POLITICS -- THE ELITE MERRY-GO-ROUND

16. (SBU) Swiss Ambassador Nellen noted that the recent reshuffling of high-level officials in the law enforcement and justice sectors exemplifies Nazarbayev's strategy for maintaining political control -- "keep your elites rotating." The lunch guests agreed that Nazarbayev's practice of periodically rotating top jobs among the same cadre of political loyalists assures political stability -- since these political elites know they will always have cushy assignments -- while preventing any of them from developing their own strong power bases. However, the lunch attendees agreed that changes will come when the Bolashak generation -- i.e., the

generation of students educated abroad -- will begin assuming positions of greater responsibility within the government in large numbers.

#### BN-350 -- PROBLEMS IN COMMUNICATION

17. (SBU) During an April 8 meeting, recently appointed Deputy Minister of Energy Asset Magauov told Hushek and the DCM that he fully understands that Kazakhstan needs to follow through on its funding commitments for the joint U.S.-Kazakhstani project to decommission and store spent fuel from Kazakhstan's BN-350 plutonium reactor. He raised the BN-350 project unprompted, thanked the U.S. government for its own contribution, and stressed that he sees the project's timely completion as "essential." He confided, however, that few in the government share his sense of urgency or, for that matter, understand the whole concept of the project. This means that when BN-350-related budgetary requests get submitted to Kazakhstani parliament -- "five million here or there" -- it is easy for the parliamentarians to push the financing back another year. Magauov said he has been lobbying Minister of Energy Mynbayev to explain the breadth and importance of the project to Prime Minister Masimov in order to get Masimov's backing to press for the necessary financing from parliament.

HOAGLAND